

GRACE DAWSON.

OUR heroine was not at all pretty.

Family traditions said that she was born in Boston—the city celebrated for being the hub from which the spokes of the universe radiate.

The mother of Grace died in those early years of which children keep no memory, and God no record against them. Her father had failed in business in New England, and when his half-brother, Jonathan Wilde, moved to Philadelphia, Mr. Dawson yielded to the suggestion that three playmates and a mother would be better for Grace than his own desolate New England hearthstone, and the little girl dwelt thenceforth on the banks of the Delaware.

Her uncle sent the bills for her clothing to her father, and received pay for allowing her to eat and sleep with his children, at about that shade under boarding-house rates, covered by the advantages of her being "permanent and not particular." Many an older victim finds out, when too late, that the fiction of being made "entirely at home," implies the utter neglect which a domestic might, perforce, submit to, without any of the kindnesses a child might expect.

Of her father, Grace saw but little, as it was understood that he was trying to recover his broken fortunes by the usual Wall Street efforts, in New York City. His labors did not seem to amount to much, and her uncle, Jonathan, had more than once rebuked the gift of some substantial article of dress or jewelry to Grace, on the ground that the father could not afford such extravagance.

Her board and school, and store-bills, had always been promptly paid, but there seemed, ever-present with the family of which she was an inmate, an impression that some such payment might be the final one; even if her father did not follow up this criminal domestic default, by applying to borrow money. Little of any definite nature was ever said, but her two beautiful cousins, Irene and Fanny, always treated her with the sort of condescension due to a poor relation. Her aunt and uncle, always incidentally mentioned at the breakfast-table, when a month's bills were due, and the little boarder felt a nervous presentiment that if her father ever did try to borrow money of her well-to-do uncle, there would be some little difficulty about retaining or obtaining a house-girl, and she would quietly fall into that position.

John was the oldest child and the boasted genius of the family, and it was considered quite a favor to be asked to wait on him in such little matters as finding a book or bringing a hat or umbrella.

Time, for all of these people, had passed on in the most commonplace of ways, until one day in the early summer of 1865. That morning the face and form of Grace were framed in one of the lower windows of the red-brick house, with its contrasting trimmings of white marble, that stood in the upper part of Chestnut Street. On looking down, she saw her uncle coming hastily up the street, at an hour much earlier than usual. She disappeared from the window, to open the hall-door, and was told to dress speedily, to take the next train for New York. A telegram had been received from her father, stating that he was somewhat ill, and wished to see his daughter and half-brother as soon as possible. He had removed from his lodgings, on Eleventh Street, down to the St. Nicholas, and they were to meet him there.

An hour later, the two were whirling over the Camden and Amboy Railroad, and, about dusk, alighted from a Broadway stage at the ladies' entrance of the great marble pile, which was their destination.

Our heroine had little time to decide whether she liked it better than the Continental or not, or whether she could endure the crowd of the great metropolitan way after the quiet streets of Philadelphia; for she was soon standing by the bedside of the father she had seen but once before, in that year, and who was evidently dying.

We fear her silent tears were a little embittered by the thought of how much disturbed her uncle and aunt would be, if the next month's bills were not paid when due.

No passing-bell helped to swell the ceaseless din of the city, which filled all things with its steady jar, and the man retained his strength of voice and intellectual faculties to the last. Only the nameless something which falls like a shadow from the spread wings of death, on the face of the dying, told that the soul had begun to withdraw from its chrysalis of clay.

Besides the two new arrivals, there were no persons in the room, save the physician and a gray-haired stranger of portly form, kind face, and seemingly of some fifty-five years of age. Grace had been too long accustomed to subdue her emotions to be very demonstrative even in her grief, and little was said before the man who was hovering on the confines of two worlds asked attention to his closing business in this one, for which—as much as to have his child with him in his last moments—he had desired her to come.

Much to the surprise of Jonathan Wilde, Mr. Dawson began to speak of having accumulated ten thousand dollars as his interest in a partnership with the gray-haired gentleman, whom he mentioned as his friend Mr. William Mann. Mr. Wilde had known that a little room up-stairs, at the corner of Broad Street and Exchange Place, near Wall Street, had been the den which Mr. Dawson called his office. He, indeed, had once been in it, without, however, seeing Mr. Mann, who, it seems, had all along been the partner in the rent, as well as in the profits, which had not been supposed to exist. It was easy enough in the great city, where no one concerns himself to know what his neighbor is doing, to accumulate much more than the few thousands mentioned, and just as easy to lose it all in a day as to gain it by the toil of years. Mr. Dawson had been fifteen years in New York, and Grace was now seventeen years old.

A simple will had been drawn up, leaving the ten thousand dollars with Mr. Mann, and also a bond to Grace from the latter, to pay interest on the money at six per cent., which would give six hundred dollars a year, and pay the few customary expenses of his daughter as usual. At her marriage, or expressing a wish to settle to herself, after the age of twenty, the entire sum was to be paid to her. After this disposal of his property, and a little gift to each of the two nieces, Irene and Fanny, it seemed a little useless for the will to go on, and, in a separate clause, make his daughter sole heiress of his property, and Mr. Mann the executor—said property seeming to consist in the old leather trunk standing near the bed, and the rather seedy overcoat hanging in the closet. Mr. Wilde took it to be the mere pretext of the lawyer to spin out the writing, and make show enough for his fee. His thoughts were running in another channel, and at length shaped themselves into the question, "Would it not be better, brother, to pay the money over to me, and let me do the best I can with it, for Grace? You know I am a good manager, and have made thirty or forty thousand while you were making ten."

"I have thought of that," said the dying man, "but a man of your standing could borrow money for business use at less than six per cent. outside of the fluctuations of currency. The expenses of Grace are nearly six hundred dollars a year, and, as Mr. Mann proposes to pay that, it will perhaps save a tax on your own purse. Besides, it is now invested in our old business, and Mr. Mann gives security."

Seeing nothing to reply, Mr. Wilde made none, and then Mr. Dawson said that he felt his end was very near, and he would like to see his daughter alone for a little while.

All the others went to one of the parlors, and father and child were left with no witness to their last interview, save the waiting angel—Death.

The gentleman lay quiet a few moments, with eyes closed, hands folded, and lips moving as if in prayer, and, when at length he spoke, his voice was so clear and strong, that, to have heard and not seen him, one would have supposed he had yet many years to live.

"My daughter," he said, "listen attentively, and think calmly, on

what I am about to say. I have loved you as I did the mother you never knew; not for beauty, but for the patient, loving heart you inherited from her. I am perhaps singular in the way I have chosen to manifest my love, and probably unwise, in that I might have failed. Your mother said, in dying, that she hoped you would some day be lifted above the wearing anxieties of common poverty, or, at all events, saved from the actual want of the necessities of life, on the brink of which condition she and I then stood. When I placed you with your uncle, I hoped, by self-denial and labor, to fulfil her dying wish in less time than the fifteen years that have brought you up to womanhood. I have succeeded, and if I do not live to share it with you, I shall, at least, have a pleasant word to tell your mother when she asks me of her child. But wealth is not happiness, and I have thought how to shield you from one of the evils which may make fortune more miserable a condition than penury. If you marry, I would have it for love, and the few thousands mentioned in my will are not enough to tempt any one greatly to belie the promptings of his own heart; while the fact that you are known to have something, might decide some worthy man who would hesitate between his love for you and your necessary poverty with him. I have known Mr. Mann for years, and, even if he were not honest, I have secured my real estate by deed to you."

Grace started at this word, and looked in half-fear lest his mind was now wandering. He saw the look, but it seemed to remind him only of a question he wished to ask, for he said, "Have you any lover now?"

"I have not even a male friend," was her reply; and he continued:

"I have invested one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in real estate, such as stores and building-lots, in this city and Brooklyn, and all the deeds are wrapped up with a picture of your mother and her letters to me before we were married, in an old leather pocket-book, or note-case. You will find it under the false bottom of that old trunk. My partner, Mr. Mann, is the agent to receive the rents and see to the insurance, and no one but he and I and the revenue officers know that I have more than the little money still in the business. He is richer than I am, for he gave me my start after I failed in Boston. Few can keep a secret; and, in informing you that you are rich, and that, for your own happiness, it is as well not to seem so for some years, I recommend that you make no confidants. Has your experience of the treatment of a poor girl taught you to agree with me?"

"Oh, indeed it has, father," she said, as the blinding tears half hid from her the kind face she had yet so little time to see.

"Then keep the trunk as for your own use; make a memorandum of where and when the deeds were recorded, in case of their loss by accident, and let your uncle and aunt and cousins share the belief of the world, that I leave you with a mere support."

Could he have read her heart, as she lay with her cheek against his, it would have gladdened his own to know how much even the six hundred a year had lifted the fear from her heart, that she would be left a poor dependent on unwilling charity. After all, many a clergyman of good talents and expensive education, has supported his family for a lifetime on six hundred a year, and died with no power to bequeath the little sum to his destitute children.

After a brief pause, he kissed her twice tenderly, and then said—"Call the others, I shall soon be gone." They were summoned, and he pressed the hand of each, and looked an affirmative answer to the questioning gaze of his old friend, which seemed to say, "Does she approve?"

After an interval, the pale lips moved, and a voice much weaker than that which had spoken to his daughter, said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then the leaden seal of mortality slowly pressed itself down upon the face, and the soul passed out into that boundless space, where we may hope its Creator still has it in his holy keeping.

Others performed the last rites for the dead, but Grace sat there, when the cold hand was released from hers; too much benumbed by the sudden events, to act or think, or even weep such tears as relieve the heart by exhausting its fountains. The light from the one window, dimmed by the dust of Broadway, fell upon her slight, girlish form, in the plain gray travelling dress; on the white hands where the plain gold ring was, the father's gift; on the bowed head, with its straight, unrippling hair of pale brown, with a tinge of what her cousins called red; on the forehead too high for beauty, and the fair face that, with all her care to avoid the sun, would show an occasional

moth spot, or freckle; on the dark gray eyes and regular features; on the occasional tear that trickled down her cheeks; thus did the pale sunlight fall, as if the bending heavens were sending down rays of comfort. The poor sad girl was an orphan and an heiress. Half of this fact was conveyed to the city of Penn in the telegram of Mr. Wilde. The other half he did not know.

The "dust to dust" was consummated in that beautiful city of the dead—Greenwood; and Grace, again returned to her home, could not but feel that the sympathy of her aunt and cousins was all the kinder; that its future developments could be insured to the amount of six hundred a year.

Not a spark of triumph or tinge of bitterness was there, however, in the orphan girl's heart; and, when again in her quiet room she knelt in that pure robe of the night in which women, like angels, approach their Maker, the sweet words of "Give us this day our daily bread" blent only with the thought of gratitude that God had given to her keeping so much of the bread others must share; and the solemn "Thy will be done" included even that long visit of her father to her mother, where he could give to her that "pleasant word,"—Grace is not left destitute.

The year 1865 had quenched its inverted torch upon the threshold of 1866, and Grace had finished her school-days, only to be more often seen at the window of the brick and marble house on Chestnut Street; and looking much as she did on the day when her uncle brought the telegram from her father; only she now dressed in black.

There was a little change at home. The monthly bills were not mentioned at periodical times, at the breakfast-table. Her dresses were no longer brought home by her two cousins, with the air of making gifts, and handed over with the remark, "That will make up nice for you." She had risen to the dignity of shopping, and bought with ready money. The house girl could be taken or dismissed with no dread of her hearing,—"Grace, dear, you would not mind attending to those rooms, would you, until we get another girl?" Cousin John had discovered that he could sometimes find his own things, and also that the playing and singing of cousin Grace was rather good for a school-girl.

Her new guardian, Mr. Mann, had thrice been to see her, and once taken her and her cousins to New York, to see the Central Park, and the neat marble monument over her father's grave at Greenwood.

Besides this, however, there had been no appreciable change, and, when her guardian had asked her if she needed more money, and offered to contrive a way for the rents of her property to be placed at her disposal, she only accepted a little addition to the fund she had reserved for charity, and still lived on less than the six hundred, in her accustomed way. In the visit to New York, there had been a kind of telegraphic signal agreed upon between Mr. Mann and herself, which, when given on the occasion of entering certain stores on upper Broadway, or passing certain vacant Brooklyn lots, signified—"This is yours." To that extent her woman vanity yielded, no more.

At the beginning of the long vacation of Harvard University for 1866, John Wilde was to graduate, at the age of twenty-three, and the visit to Boston on that eventful occasion by the whole family had long been anticipated with pleasure.

In the spring of that year, an event had occurred to deepen and intensify the growing affection of Grace for the family of her uncle, and to satisfy her that with all the closeness and penuriousness of her aunt, there was yet in some not often reached depth of her nature, a well-spring of genuine kindness and charity. A young German girl, named Dora Mayer, had long been a servant in the family, and Grace learned from the tea-table conversation that she had been detected in purloining some small articles of plate. But great was the surprise of our heroine to learn that not only was the culprit to escape exposure and punishment, but that Mr. Jonathan Wilde had actually secured her a place among some Germans who were going to service in the South, and advised her to go beyond the temptations of city life. The aunt half won the heart of Grace by saying, "Do not show that you know it, Grace dear, for she feels badly enough as it is." She quite won it a few days later by stooping over the orphan and saying, after a motherly kiss, "I fear I have not been all that a mother would have been to you, but should you ever have any trouble, or any thing pressing on your mind, you will find no more attentive ear, or warmer sympathy, than in your seemingly cold aunt."

The tears sprang to the eyes of her auditor, and Grace never could

tell why the impulse to confide to her aunt the secret of her father's death-bed, was repressed. We only know that the secret was not then told.

The long-expected commencement occasion at length arrived, and the Wilde family, Grace included, were in Boston. Bunker-Hill Monument had been climbed, and the sights of Washington and Tremont Streets had been exhausted, and, on the eventful day when cousin John was to deliver his maiden speech, Grace was one of the happiest of the party driving across the bridge to Cambridge.

One set of collegiate exercises is too much like all others, to merit description, and fans, summer toilets, and cool beauty in muslin,—inter-checked with male humanity, perspiring and in mourning,—were the prominent features of the audience. John Wilde had graduated with high honor, and had a composition in Latin, besides a brilliant speech, in which he glowingly pictured the progress of civilization, and the useful and fine arts, during the past century. Snowy handkerchiefs waved at its close, and there was the soft pattering of kid gloves at the telling passages—the refinement of applause, as if the hands kissed in ecstasy.

One pale student, however, divided the attention won by this popular young gentleman. He had none of the confidence or city manner that made others graceful, and his attire betrayed the fact that he patronized other than fashionable tailors. His theme was *eloquence*, and he seemed not so much to describe and define it as to *feel* it.

At the close, when he bent forward in that indescribable approach by which the greatest advocates are wont to magnetize their juries, and his eye seemed to rest unconsciously on the form of a venerable clergyman, known and loved in all New England, his words were so impressive as to start tears to more than one bright eye.

"Eloquence, like genius, is not acquired, but *born*. Its subject may partake of the smell of the lamp, and the labor of the laboratory or the office; and it may borrow much from action and from cultivation. Yet—more intangible than air, and more subtle than the lightning—it may rise beyond the preparation, the occasion, and the inspiration, and speak from the eye, melt from the tongue, and glow from the very presence of the man who *feels*. As for her chosen and peculiar home, it is the pulpit. The senate and the rostrum may lure her with the golden pomp of earthly honors, but, in the sacred oratory of the pulpit, the voice of true eloquence speaks in nobler accents and more fervid tones than ever startled the Grecian Ecclesia or shook the Roman Forum. 'There stands the legate of the skies, *his* theme divine, *his* office sacred, *his* credentials clear. By him, the violated law speaks out its thunders; and through him, in tones as sweet as angels use, the gospel whispers peace!'"

There was no applause to follow this, but there was sympathy and feeling.

The next day her cousin John invited Grace to a sail with him on the bay, in a boat belonging to one of his Boston classmates; and she thought him wondrously improved, with his air of mature manhood, and his delicate and unusual courtesies to her.

She was ready to accept his apology for his parents, that they were only now realizing that she was no longer a child; but she was utterly overwhelmed by his florid avowal of a love for her as old as his memory, and his declaration that his parents had long hoped for the union. They were not full cousins, which he was thankful for, as some were opposed to family intermarriages, and, if she would only consent, the love-home pictured by the pretended prince, as he told Pauline, of the Lake of Como, would be poor to that this Claude Melnotte would conjure up for her.

She listened in surprise, but accepted him in the matter-of-course kind of a way in which she had always obeyed rather than granted his requests. That the brilliant and handsome John Wilde should ever fancy her, was as astounding as if some fairy had suddenly gifted her with his clear complexion, hazel eyes, and brown curls. He was too rich to care for her little ten thousand; too popular with lovely women to be attracted by her moderate good looks, and, while she could not understand it, she thought her father would be pleased, if he knew it. This must be all for love.

Much as this new theme must have interested her, it did not prevent the rather sudden and *mal-à-propos* question,—“Who was that young student who spoke yesterday on eloquence?” He looked annoyed, but replied, “His name is Richard Vane. He is a poor fellow educated by some Southern church for the ministry, and had been

to some Southern schools, and two years in a theological seminary there, before he came to Harvard. He will spend his life on a salary as poor as one of his own church mice, but might make a passable lawyer if he was not bent on preaching at once.”

He then changed the subject to his own prospects, and said he had half a mind to go South himself, and buy a plantation among the broken-down chivalry. She laughed at that, and the sail was soon terminated by a return to their hotel, and preparations for a return to Philadelphia.

Much to her delight, the subject of the engagement was little spoken of, after the kisses and embraces of her uncle, aunt, and cousins, and her rather decided refusal to consummate the marriage under a year from that time. Her lover was a faithful escort to places of amusement, stood by her when she sang, and drove out with her often; but was not over demonstrative, and she liked him better for that. The fact of her betrothal was made public among the friends of the family, but that was not needed to bind either her or him to the promise made on Boston Bay. Her word once given was final, as if the solemn “Until death doth you part” had been spoken at the altar; while, had he expressed a wish to break the engagement, it would have seemed more natural and proper than the marriage, and, as ever since childhood, she would have expected John to have his own way.

That worthy individual seemed to have impressed himself by the words, uttered in jest, as to becoming a planter in the South, and, after various sportive renewals of the subject, a serious talk was one day had with his father, and then it was announced that he was, in truth, going to the land of sugar-cane and cotton.

Mr. Wilde, Sr., remarked at the breakfast table, after this announcement, “I shall give John ten thousand dollars to start with, Grace, so as to make him equal to you.”

She thought of what a pleasant surprise she would have for all of them, some day, but only said, “Thank you sir.”

In another week, there was a very lover-like parting from her, and John was gone. He wrote first from Savannah, on his way to the orange plantations on the St. John's River in Florida. Then he was in Alabama and in Mississippi. Then in Tennessee, and finally enamored with the grand scenery and fertile lands in that part of Georgia bordering on Tennessee. There he bought a finely-improved farm rather than plantation, for it was above the region of cotton, and in that of wheat and corn. He described it as a rural paradise, but sadly in need of repair and attention. He must stay there to see to these, and insisted that his mother, Grace, and Irene, should come down and regulate his bachelor establishment, if Fanny would keep house for his father until Christmas. The beautiful blonde, his sister Fan, was as pleased at the prospect of the reins of domestic government in her own hands, for a month or two, as the brilliant brunette Irene, and the other two, were with going, and the arrangement was made. With characteristic Yankee independence the three ladies expressed their baggage to Dalton, where the gentleman was to meet them, and took the cars with no escort.

After some little amusement from the frequent question, if they were coming South to teach the freedmen schools—to which Irene invariably answered, yes—they arrived in safety, and at once packed themselves and trunks into the four-horse spring wagon, which was to be their conveyance for the remaining twenty-five miles, and their church and pleasure carriage when there. A happier party never awoke the echoes of rock and mountain with silvery laughter, or bathed flushed and rosy faces in crystal roadside springs. Even quiet little “domestic Grace,” as her lover called her, wore out a pair of new shoes climbing the mossy rocks and exploring the vine-constructed valleys, and looked as blooming as the country lasses.

Happy girlhood! its seasons are all hung full of the May-time, and autumn and winter bring no shadows for them, until the summer of life has withered the blossoms of their glad some spring.

What if the grand old southern forests seemed anticipating the frosts not yet come? the changing hues of the leaves, and glowing splendor of the mosses, only gave color and variety to the garlands of hope they wove.

It was night when our quartette arrived at the Southern investment—i. e., John's new home—and the ladies were too tired to see more than a cottage in a large yard before they sought repose and slumber, after the supper of corn-bread, ham and eggs, with tea. But, the next morning, Grace and all the others fully endorsed the rather enthusias-

tic account of his purchase given in the letters of the son, brother, and lover, in one.

A few days later, a piano, which John had ordered from Steinway's, came to the depot by express, and was soon contrasting its polished legs and soft cover with the pine tables and split-bottomed chairs and country-woven counterpanes of the former proprietor.

Carpentering, clearing up neglected land, repairing fences, house-keeping in the nearest approximation to Northern style, regulating the grown-up negroes John had hired, and keeping from stepping on the little negroes, who were omnipresent,—all this was soon the order of each day, and frost came before Grace and her lover had any leisure for courtship.

At length they took time, and the old mossy foot-log over the stream, which now had its bright waters died brown by the infusion of falling autumn leaves, was a favorite resort. The names of other lovers had been rudely carved on the great beech-tree which overshadowed the stream, and the spot was, in some measure, consecrated by the loves of those now turned to dust.

On one misty afternoon, when the tops of the mountains faded in a purple haze, and the atmosphere was soft and mild as Indian summer, the pair sat on this old log beneath the beech and above the stream; and the memory of the words then spoken was ever after more closely woven into the lives of each than even the declaration of love and promise of marriage union.

We mention this conversation, not because its language was remarkable, or the thoughts clothed in language were wonderful, but because it was all a new revelation of the character of the lovers to each other, and is therefore a new revelation of their characters to us.

John Wilde was an entire believer in the wildest theories, or, rather, no theories, of German infidelity, and devoted nearly an hour to the instruction of Grace and the effort to convert her to his views. Those views, so far as they related to God, salvation, and the immortality of the soul, might all be expressed in the words, *I know nothing; therefore, there is nothing.* An easy creed, making human ignorance the measure of infinitude.

Grace had listened with an amazement which he took for complete conviction, but she soon undeceived him by such a reply to his sophistry, and such an unravelling of his cobwebs, as speedily made him the astonished party of the twain. Even her gentle nature could not entirely restrain her from expressing the scorn which an educated Christian feels for those philosophers who erase the suns of the soul from space, and then write the word NOTHING, over the abyss of night, as both hope and creed. Some of her words were so true, and her inferences so sharp, as to make his face flush and his ears tingle.

It was his first mental combat with an intelligent woman, and he was foiled and beaten by the very weapons of reason to which he had appealed.

He looked divided between the inclination to strike her, like a ruffian, or break his engagement with her, like a gentleman; but he may have had his reasons for not doing either. So he contented himself with saying, sneeringly, "You had better get a pair of breeches and turn preacher!" and then arose from the log and moved toward the house.

The brook beneath his feet had babbled to him of a depth he had never suspected, in the nature of his little half-servant, Grace. She was pale under the power of that heart-question, "Great God, am I to marry a skeptic?" To us it seems that the father who gave fifteen lonely years for his daughter's happiness, may have labored in vain. He only knows who is "God over all—blessed forever."

It was the third week of the stay of the Philadelphians in Georgia, before they thought of seeking such church privileges as that rural district afforded. They learned that there was a neat little chapel, framed and painted, five miles away, under the pastoral care of a young minister who had charge of three churches as the *quid pro quo* of his salary of five hundred dollars a year.

In the few days following the long talk between the lovers beneath those lover-tablets on the bark of the beech-tree above the stream, John Wilde, or J. Wilde, Esq., as his cards now were marked, seemed a little uneasy. The old patronizing, self-complacent superiority with which he had permitted Grace Dawson to love him, had received a severe shock; and, as it evidently would not do to fall in his own estimation or hers, he adopted that usual male expedient—showing his authority. Few of the colored servants received more sharp and per-

emptory orders for a few days than did his affianced bride; but, as Grace obeyed in all things in the same meek and cheerful way that had been her custom from the time she could remember, it seemed unnecessary to hold a tight rein with so gentle and perfectly broken an animal, and that novel exhibition of spirit under his attack on her religion, lost the edge of its first offence. Thus it was, when, with his fast-trotting four-in-hand, the green-and-crimson panels of his spring-wagon flashing in the bright Sabbath sunlight, as the party whirled around the beautiful road above his fertile valley, "Richard," *alias* John, was "himself again," and he pointed out beauties to his mother, petted the spoiled brunette Irene, and patronized Grace, in the old way.

That Sabbath held in reserve for our heroine two surprises—one pleasant, the other not so much so. The neat little chapel, reached at last, seemed to nestle in the embrace of the oaken grove, and they soon found seats on the simple benches within. A young man, not devoid of natural gracefulness, and neatly dressed in black, arose to announce the old hymn, to which there would be no organ-accompaniment:

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

When the first tones of the clear, powerful voice filled the air above the large congregation, Grace started, and Mr. Wilde looked up in surprise. It was the young man who, since that commencement day in Cambridge, had been to her the embodiment of his theme—*eloquence*.

Soon the full, earnest tones of many voices compensated well for the absence of operatic singing, and, after the prayer, followed the sermon.

It was upon the strange theory that the love of God—which had filled the Sacred Book, and carpeted time, from the creation, through the epochs of deluge, patriarchs, prophets, priests, kings, psalmist, the example of Christ, and the testimony of the first martyrs, with words of love and examples of duty—was not yet satisfied; that when John, in Patmos, was about to close the long record of God's work for man, the patient Father stayed his hand, to spread upon the last page the memorable invitation beginning with, "The spirit and the bride say, Come!"

Upon this text the young minister proceeded to unfold those chief temptations which can win the soul to its own highest good—the perfections of Jesus Christ, which ever invite—the love of God, which fills the ages with its music, and ever whispers—come!

The sermon was not a long one, but Grace Dawson, who had from childhood been a member of the same branch of the church, dated her best and holiest religious experiences from that day. As for John Wilde, he said that "Vane would have made a capital fellow for criminal cases;" and Irene said it was all pretty, but rather too affecting for the pulpit—"We expect to cry, you know, at tender passages in theatres."

The second surprise of that day was when Grace left her friends talking with some acquaintances her cousins had formed in the nearest town, and went alone to the spring at the foot of the hill. Near it was a wagon whose occupants had brought their dinner with them, and one of them was filling the tin cups of the others at the bubbling fountain. She looked up and held out her hand with a cordial smile, and it was no other than Dora, the young German girl, discharged by her aunt for stealing, and so kindly provided for beyond the temptations of the city.

Grace did not return her greetings with as much warmth as they were given. If she had shown the confusion and shame natural at so suddenly meeting one who must know of her crime, all the kindness of the heart of our heroine would have arisen to reassure the criminal. But the frank, hearty gladness, and free, open manner, looked like brazen boldness, and Grace only asked a few questions—pleaded her waiting companions as an excuse for declining the acquaintance of the people in the wagon, and only said—"Do so," to the avowal of an intended early visit by the young Teuton. She did not speak of this second meeting, but it annoyed her, even when she met the young minister at the side of the vehicle of her party, and heard him promise his old college chum an early visit.

The promised visit was made, lasting two days, and was enjoyed by no one more than by the betrothed of the new planter. That it was

not without some interest to Irene, we gather from the following letter written by her to the sister left in the Northern home :

"HAPPY VALLEY, October 28, 1866.

"DEAR FAN: We have all been too busy here to be good correspondents, and have by a sort of common consent made cousin Grace our business scribe. Just fancy such a quiet, plain-faced little puss being our sister some day! No wonder brother John is in no hurry! This is a beautiful country, romantic, wild, sublime, and all that, and has only one or two drawbacks, the lack of dry-goods stores and young men. I do not know which I miss the most, but the latter deficiency is now in part atoned for. You remember that pale, interesting-looking youth (he would have been interesting if he had been blessed with a good tailor!) who so much enlisted his own sympathies (and ours) in a speech at Harvard, when John graduated. He is a preacher here, and makes a very passable beau. He dresses in better taste than he did, and looks like a model for men, in his mountain home. A little sunburn has much improved his once pale face, and I think the chickens, always sacrificed by these people when their priest (I beg pardon—pastor) comes, may possess more nutritive qualities than the omnipresent *hash* of boarding-houses. He has the *thews and sinews* of a Nimrod, and it is perfectly delightful to feel that leaning on him in a mountain ramble is like the support of a rooted oak; and one accustomed to horseback riding with city gallants can appreciate the strength of arm that lifts one to the saddle, without a seeming effort. Only one thing annoys me. We asked Grace to go, as a matter of form, thinking she would never dare to mount these wild horses; but she had learned to ride some way, while at school, and is the most fearless horsewoman I ever saw. Would you have believed it? But Miss Pale Face (blooming enough now though, I must confess!) is mortgaged, and never could be in my way if she was not.

"Now don't think I am such a ninny as to fall in love with this backwoods Apollo, but you may wager your diamonds that I shall lead him such a dance over these old hills, that his head will be too dizzy for his usual pulpit eloquence. He is to be here again next week, and I intend he shall abuse me as his *Clara Vere de Vere*, before I leave these parts. You know I mean Tennyson's—

'You held your course without remorse,
To make him trust his modest worth,
And, last, you fixed a vacant stare,
And slew him with your noble birth.'

"That's my style! I only wish John was a little more lover-like to Grace—in company. He lets *anybody* entertain her, who will save him the trouble! Vane has to be encouraged up to our ideal, as he is too modest. Heigh-ho! mother wants me to attend to the poultry, and that is a greater bore than letter-writing. Love to papa. Good-by.

"Your sister,

"IRENE."

Richard Vane did come, and came often, for the cultivated mind of John Wilde was a treat to him, like a drink of refreshing water, after the rather insipid companionships of his mountain charge. He could lead his flock to the fold of Christ, and did; but few lambs of his fold could follow to those high pastures on the hills of God where he loved to climb. John liked him in a superior, patronizing way, and gave him good dinners and advice. Irene was only annoyed that he saw too readily how far she was above him, and turned to the more humble and less beautiful Grace, notwithstanding her engagement. So the brunette encouraged him.

On one pleasant day there was a drive, and Grace remained at the house to attend to the formal country supper. While busy, presiding over the mysteries of the kitchen, she heard a lighter step than that of the cook, and, turning, saw with little pleasure that she was alone to entertain the banished German handmaid. There was a forlorn attempt to sympathize with the much the other had to tell, when suddenly Dora stopped her own rapid account of the ills and blessings of life in the woods, and asked, "Do you know what I was sent away from Philadelphia for?"

Our heroine was tempted to say sharply, "For stealing"—but such a reply was evidently not expected, and she replied, evasively, "Uncle never talked much about it."

"Well, I never could understand it! I always did my work, until one day your aunt took it into her head that I was too young to be without friends in a big city, and nothing would do but I must be

bundled off with a lot of folks coming South. And I was threatened to be turned off with no recommendation for the next place, if I didn't come. They talked so good and sensible, I had to come, and I'm glad I did, but I don't know why till yet."

Grace looked shocked and frightened, but was silent.

"Don't look so uneasy, young miss, I always did like you the best, for you wasn't so high above servants as some, but I've had it on my mind to ask you something since I saw you at meetin', and I will ask it. What was there in a little black book, like a pocket-testament, that lay in the tray of your trunk, with a pencil in it?"

Grace was pale now, but said, "It was my memorandum-book, and in it my guardian had written the dates and place of record of some papers that are important to me, but to no one else."

"Would your aunt have cared to know about those papers?"

"Why ask me that?"

"Well, I am into it now, and may as well tell it all. I have often seen your aunt try your trunk (that one you brought from New York) with her keys, but the lock was queer, and no key would open it but yours. One day you went to ride with Mr. John, and, as he was hurrying you, you left your keys in the trunk. I was in the next room, and just caught sight of them through the open door, when your aunt came to your room and went straight to your trunk. I saw her open it, and open that little black book, and appear flurried, and heard her say something about a 'secret, deceitful huzzy,' and then I thought best to let her know where I was, and I coughed. She was up and had the trunk shut in a minute, and asked me if I was raised by her for a spy. I took out the keys when she went down, and you might remember my giving them to you. It was the next day that she took the strong notion for me to go away, and I have studied and studied, and can't think of any thing I ever did to be sent away for, if that was not it, and I never told you of that then!"

There was such a whirling in the poor head of Grace, that she never knew what words she spoke to satisfy the German, or change the subject. There was clearly no theft of silver, and she was more than relieved when Dora refused to stay, and left the house before the return of the aunt and cousins, and the clergyman.

She went to her own room, and undressed for bed; and the headache reported by the mulatto chambermaid to the others, was real enough, for the fierce throb in the temples long defied her efforts to be calm and pray. She did remember the ride and the keys, for the deeds were there, and a prying chambermaid might have found her secret and her father's. That remembered day was followed by the caresses of the aunt and the plea for confidence, more than once repeated. Then the trip to Boston, the sail on the bay, and the sudden avowal of life-long love, the growing kindness of all the family, and the sanctioned engagement, with the lover's wish for speedy marriage.

It was all plain enough now. The memoranda told enough to link with the private talks and mysterious manner of Mr. Mann, and show her an heiress beyond all doubt, save what a visit to the New York records could remove; and John had been there, and Jonathan before him—at least, to the city at that time. Daylight came to red eyes and sick heart, uncomfortable by slumber, and the little form would still be convulsed by a shudder at the thought—"My husband an infidel and a speculator on love—so strange and unnatural in all his manifestations of affection!"—and then the prayer of agony—"O God! save me!"

When she went down to dinner, her flow of spirits was more than natural, and Irene was seriously annoyed that her betrothed cousin avoided her brother, and was in the way of the flirtation with 'our young parson.

The visit of Richard Vane was this time to last a week, and every day there was a riding-party up some of the mountain-roads.

The main turnpike or toll-road passed over a spur of the mountain, and then wound down, in the same zigzag as the ascent, to a deep gorge, down which foamed in greater volume the same stream which flowed down the valley toward the mouth of the cañon. Here the road found the gorge wide enough for a shelf-like bank on one side or the other, and ran for some miles between the mountains, on this side or on that, as the capricious stream varied its course. The steep mountains narrowed the heavens to a blue belt above, and, beneath the great gray rocks and towering chestnuts, it was the delight of our friends to ride—dashing through the rapid fords of the stream, and eating the luncheon by some fairy spring, cold as the heart of

the granite. On the last day but one that Mr. Vane was to stay, a little picnic was planned, to be enjoyed at the farthest of the fords and five miles from any house. The minister and Grace won the honors of equestrianism, galloping along precipitous ledges where the queenly Irene trembled for her life, and John Wilde for his horses. It was a still day, very warm for the season, and the negro predictions of a storm were laughed at. But in the midst of the enjoyment, as John in the wildest of spirits drank a toast to Nature, that dread power responded by the first mutterings of her storms. Beneath the almost perpendicular mountain, and the thick trees, the mustering of the black cloud-squadrons had been unnoticed, and the first warning was a dash of rain that suggested seeking for a cave, to the two gentlemen, and wishing for wrappings and umbrellas to the ladies. An over-leaning rock was found, with marks of wagoners' camp-fires to show its previous tenantry, and it proved an admirable, dry, and safe shelter from which to view that grandest of sights, a storm in the mountains. We shall not describe it, nor will he who has heard that thunder-drum of heaven beating time to the echoes of the eternal hills, or watched the spray of cascades created from every cliff or rocky barrier, or who has cowered as the lightning struck the giant pine on the crest, and filled the gorge with the rain of fiery splinters, ever attempt to paint in words what the hills and the heavens labor to produce.

The storm, commencing at noon, was not over until near night, and then the frequent fords of the stream, swollen to swimming depth in places, were exceedingly perilous. But Richard Vane knew the ground and led the way, and the spirits of all parties arose as all of the fords were passed save the last one, which was very swift and narrow, but not deep. It was reached at dusk, and they saw with terror that a raft or dam of driftwood and logs had formed in the only passable part, and the imprisoned water was dashing over this and raging through the dark ravine below.

John Wilde was flushed with the wine he had been almost the only one to drink, and at once proposed to urge the horses down the bank, and through the sharp rocks of the water-filled ravine. Mr. Vane looked and said, "It would be almost certain death to attempt it."

"But I am not going to stay in the woods all night, like an owl," said the other, "and I will attempt it."

"But the ladies could not go!"

"I will find a ford for them easy enough."

"If you insist, stay with them and let me try it, as I am accustomed to these places."

"Just like you, to take an easy glory when you know I would not give way!"

All remonstrance by his friend, or entreaty by his sister and cousin, was of no avail, and as he urged his tired but fiery animal down the steep bank, the young minister threw off his coat, and sprang down to the brink after him. With a splash, horse and rider were in the water and half-way across, when the forefeet of the quadruped slipped from a hidden rock near the surface, and, as he fell over on his side, the head of the rash rider struck another sharp ledge with a dull thud, heard above the roar of the torrent; and, instantly washed from his seat, he was swept away.

Quickly as this was done, the watching man on the bank had plunged in after him, while Irene shrieked, and Grace prayed.

For a while nothing more could be seen in the gathering gloom but the horse escaping, evidently injured, and limping up the other bank. Soon, however, a faint voice called far below, and Grace was the one to clamber down the rocks, and find Richard Vane dripping on the bank, and supporting the motionless form of his friend. One look at that great gap in his head was enough even in that dim light, and the finger on heart or pulse felt no throb. He was dead.

They two had to bear the body up to the road, for Irene had fainted where she was left.

It was midnight before Richard had cut a path with his knife through the thick brush of the mountain above, and nearly day before the horses were led over it, and the dead man carried by the strong mountaineer, and Irene led along its slippery margin by the steady hand of Grace.

Then the living man carried the dead before him on his horse, while those of the two women were followed by the lame animal.

As they at last descended the mountain-spur, and crossed the same stream, already much lessened in volume by the brief time, the white, scared look came to her face again, as Grace thought of who had

sat upon that old log beside her, and questioned the existence of a God. The thought would come to her,—Had he recognized Him and His providence now?

He at least had solved the mystery, if not the purpose and origin of death. What of the beyond?

The young Vane, with his left arm in a sling, from a sprain received that night, was gone to his flock and his three churches.

The dead man had sent to his Northern home for burial. The father, Jonathan Wilde, came to rent out the farm, and the three saddened women shadowed their Philadelphia home with black robes.

Irene had not made a captive of Mr. Vane, and Dora was seen no more.

Christmas was dull enough that year, with the hope and pride of the household gone, and the aunt seemed to look upon Grace with some such aversion as if she was the cause of his death. Jonathan Wilde had frequent talks with her, and seemed to delight in pointing out to her openings for the investment of capital, to which the ten thousand still in the hands of Mr. Mann would have been utterly inadequate.

In February of 1867 she read a notice that Rev. Richard Vane, of Georgia, had received a transfer to a metropolitan church near the famed Avenue of New York, and, as the churches North and South were still separated, the paper was particular to state that influential men who had known him at the university were the parties who had brought it about with some difficulty.

His salary was ample now, and he came to see her, and told of the beautiful brown-stone church, and the grand organ and sweet-voiced choir. When Mr. Mann came to see her, she returned to New York with him, and sat under the ministry of the backwoods preacher, who went with her the next day to visit her father's grave.

Among the early violets at the foot of the slab, he told his love, and found, when she leaned on his breast and told him all (all but the secret), that he had won a heart no other ever possessed.

We can know very little of the emotions of the dead, nor do we certainly know if they are concerned for the dear ones left behind. Yet—

"Tis a beautiful belief, that spirits of the dead

Come in the lonely hours of night to watch around our bed,"

and it is not unlikely that the father of Grace led her mother to some rift in the blue pavement of heaven, and said, "Our child has more than wealth—the riches of love!"

Before the June roses of 1867 had poured their sweets into the lap of summer, they were married from her Philadelphia home; and it was Uncle Jonathan Wilde who put the title-deeds to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars of New York property into the hands of the astonished bridegroom, and said, "I have given you an heiress, sir!"

Mr. Mann was not so pompous when he accounted for the rents and the ten thousand. He only said, as he refused all compensation, "I am richer than you are, sir, and she was the child of my friend."

Grace says that she is kept from becoming vain of becoming Vane, by her husband, who insists upon changing her old name of Grace Dawson for that of the English heroine—*Grace Darling*. He generally gets it wrong, however, and calls her his Darling Grace.

The minister now owns the "Happy Valley," and, with his little wife, who is really blooming into beauty under the sun of love, will spend his summer vacations with his parents, who live there.

Our story, reader, has been of Love and Death, the twin rivals for the empire of life. But no one can tell so sweetly as Tennyson how love always wins:

"What time the mighty moon was gathering light,

Love paced the thymy plots of Paradise,

And all about him rolled his lustrous eyes;

When, turning round a cassia, full in view,

Death, walking all alone beneath a yew,

And talking to himself, first met his sight.

'You must begone,' said Death, 'these walks are mine.'

Love wept and spread his sheeny vane for flight;

Yet ere he parted said, 'This hour is thine;

Thou art the shadow of life, and as the tree

Stands in the sun and shadows all beneath,

So, in the light of great eternity,

Life eminent, creates the shade of death:

The shadow passeth when the tree shall fall,

But I shall reign forever, over all.' "